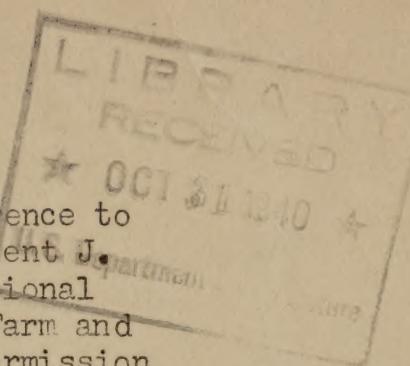


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Radio address entitled "The Message of the Conference to the People of America" made by The Most Rev. Vincent J. Ryan, D. D., Bishop of Bismarck, President of National Catholic Rural Life Conference, on the National Farm and Home Hour on October 2, 1940. (Reprinted with permission of the National Catholic Rural Life Conference.)

The rural problem is the crux of the social and economic problems of the nation. For this reason the entire nation should be vitally interested in the discussions of the National Catholic Rural Life Conference. The city as well as the country should be interested for the major social and economic problems of the city are rooted on the countryside.

Distress in agriculture always has its repercussions in the city. When thirty million farmers, for instance, lose their purchasing power, because of low prices or for other reasons, the wheels of industry slow down with resultant depression and unemployment. Again when unfavorable economic conditions or other causes impel millions to migrate from the country to the city, their presence in the city tends to lower wages, increase unemployment, and swell the slums. Wholesome conditions in agriculture are essential for wholesome conditions in the city.

In the short time allotted me I shall summarize briefly the credo of the National Catholic Rural Life Conference. The countryside offers the best opportunity for wholesome family life and for the nurturing of Christian virtue. Industrial life on the other hand seems hostile to the family, to Christian marriage, and to the nurturing of Christian virtue. It is in the city that divorce abounds. The city is the graveyard of the family. As early as 1934 it was discovered that the birth rate of the city had fallen to a point 20 percent below that necessary for a stationary population, while the rural areas had a birth rate more than thirty-five percent above the point necessary for a stationary population. Recent census reports indicate that in many cities in the United States, sixty percent of the marriages are childless. The dwindling birth rate, which today threatens the nation with eventual extinction, is enemy Number One, and the farm is the first line of our national defense.

The Conference believes in wide-spread ownership as the basis of security and independence. It believes that wide-spread ownership is the best antidote for Communism. It believes that farming offers the best opportunity for the masses to acquire ownership. The Conference believes in the family-size owner-operated farm. It believes that every effort should be put forth to discourage large-scale mechanized farming. Each farm of this type means the dispossessing of many rural families. It means over-production of food stuffs. Large-scale mechanized farming results in soil mining and in the destruction of our most important natural resource, namely, the land.

For industrial workers, the Conference believes in promoting a system of part-time farming. Rural homesteads for industrial workers would provide

most of the necessities of life to augment the family income. The wholesome atmosphere of country life would also be a great benefit to the worker's family.

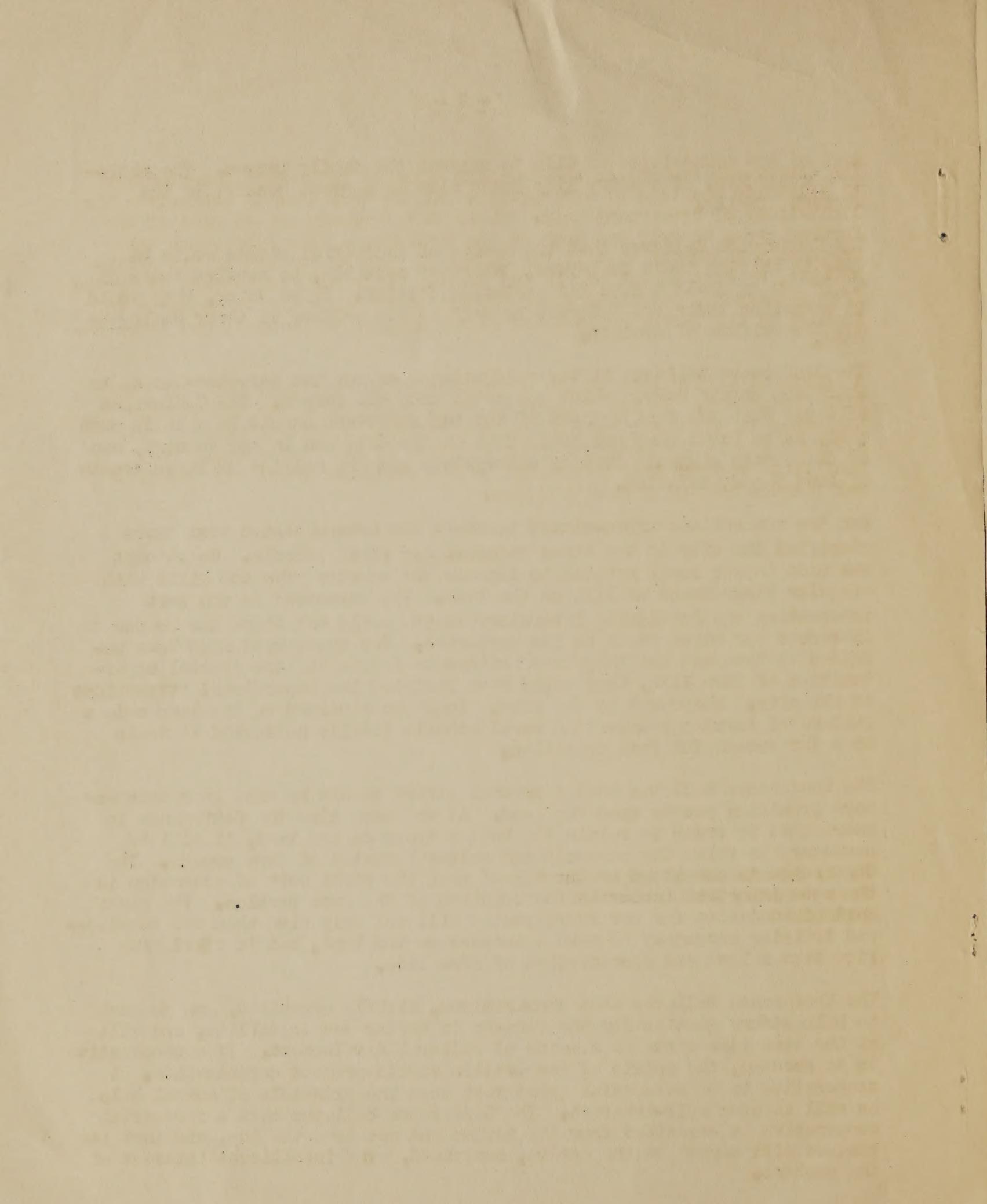
The Conference believes that the owners of industrial plants would be wise in helping their employees, wherever possible, to acquire homes of their own on small tracts for part-time farming. By so doing, they would be promoting their own interest as well as the welfare of their employees and the welfare of society.

The Conference believes in the readjustment of our tax structure so as to shift the unfair burden which now rests upon the farmer. The Conference believes that the readjustment of the tax structure should be made in such a way as to favor home ownership both in the city and in the country, and to discourage gigantic farming enterprises and the holding of large tracts of land for speculation.

For two generations urban-minded teachers and urban-tainted text books glorified the city in the class rooms of our rural schools. No attempt was made in our rural schools to impress the country boys and girls with singular blessedness of life on the land. The farmstead is the most interesting and intriguing laboratory in the world but there was no one to introduce our rural youth to its mysteries. Had these mysteries been unfolded to them and had they been trained to appreciate the special opportunities of farm life, they would have resisted the superficial attractions of the city. Many went to the city. Many who remained on the land made a failure of farming because the rural schools totally neglected to train them for successful farm operation.

The Conference believes that a special effort should be made to retain our more promising youths upon the land. At the same time the Conference is aware that in order to retain the better types on the land, it will be necessary to raise the economic and cultural status of farm groups. The Conference is committed to the belief that the right sort of education is the most important factor in the solution of the farm problem. The right sort of education for our rural youths will not only give them the knowledge and training necessary to make a success on the land, but it will also give them a love and appreciation of farm life.

The Conference believes that cooperatives, rightly organized, can do much to help secure justice for the farmers in buying and in selling, and will at the same time serve as a means of cultural development. If a cooperative is to succeed, the spirit of cooperation should proceed organization. A cooperative to be successful must rest upon the principle of mutual help as well as upon self-interest. The Conference believes that a successful cooperative is organized from the bottom and not from the top, and that its success will depend on the active, sustained, and intelligent interest of the members.



The Conference recognizes the need and value of government intervention to alleviate the ills of agriculture. At the same time it recognizes the limitations of government help. There is a tendency on the part of the farming group to rely too much on the government. The Conference has frequently announced that if the farmer is ever to get out of his difficulties, he must go out on his own power. While some assistance is needed from government, cooperation and education are the chief instruments to be used by the farmer in arriving at a condition of security and independence.

A spiritual motive lead to the organizing of the National Catholic Rural Life Conference. It was founded to bring religion to the spiritually neglected in the rural sections of the nation. Spiritual motives will always dominate the programs and activities of the Conference. The Conference ~~realizes~~ that you cannot have a wholesome rural life which is not founded basically upon religion.

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